



# the WARRIOR

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January 26, 2009

## VVA SAN JACINTO CHAPTER # 343 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Wolf Biedenfeld..... Vice President James Leonard..... Secretary Carlos Uresti  
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## DAWN OF A NEW YEAR.....

We've hit the ground running as the chapter starts the "New Year" off with a bang by scheduling the '2009 Veterans Day BBQ at Bear Creek Park – Pavilion # 6 on November 8, 2009 and longtime chapter member Jesse Herrera reported the date was approved. The VVA Texas State Council Meeting in June '2009 is still being finalized and there are still a few items that will be ironed out as the chapter prepares to host the upcoming meeting. The opening ceremonies will include the Navy Junior R.O.T.C. unit from Caney Creek High School presenting the colors and the De George Color Guard will perform the POW/MIA ceremony. The De George at Union Station has been designated to benefit from the AVVA Texas State Council's Project A.M.I.G.O. We have started collecting

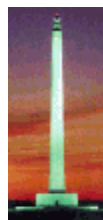
items for the "Silent Auction" in which half of the revenue raised goes to the host chapter and Suzie Meeks will be handling the donated items. Anyone who wishes to volunteer their time for this chapter undertaking can contact the Planning Committee Chair Bill Meeks, Jr. at (281) 353-6420 or [Bmeeksjr@aol.com](mailto:Bmeeksjr@aol.com). Our Texas State Council delegates James Leonard and Henry Rutledge will have a packet of meeting information for all of the State VVA Chapters at our next TSC meeting on February 20-22, 2009 in Tyler, Texas.

## BRAND NEW!!!!!!

Veterans Collectibles is now "THE VETERAN COLLECTION" and you can contact them at: Medals of America, 114 Southchase Blvd., Fountain Inn, SC 29644 – Phone: 800-605-4001 or Fax: 800-407-8640 or <http://www.vvastore.com>.



**Special Notice:** If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call this toll-free number 1-800-273-8255, available 24/7, and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.



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## President's Corner.....The Prez



This year presents unique opportunities to influence the future of Veterans' programs in the US. The new President is electronically "connected" to his constituency (us). You can access the 1<sup>st</sup> part of this connection by going to – change.gov – on the Internet. Try it, you may like it.

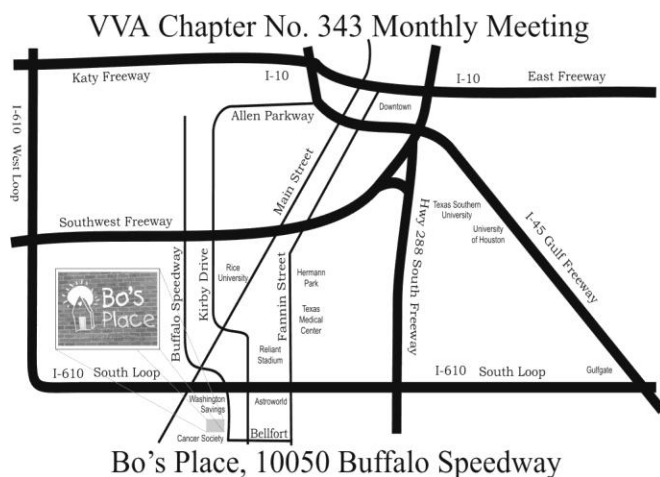
We have a New VA Secretary – read "Boss." It is former Chief of Staff, General Shinseki. He was a very efficient and realistic military leader. He is also a Vietnam Veteran and was part of the Cadre of Officers that helped rebuild the Army in the late 70's and 80's. I believe he is a "Brother." I just don't know if he is a caring brother. I

think we do owe him the benefit of the doubt. We also owe him our voices of concern about the current problems in the VA and some possible improvements.

For both Shinseki and the President, voice concerns and suggestions. It's a new team, let's train them right. We most certainly want them to remember our motto: *"Never again will one generation of Veterans abandon another"*

## SUPPORT OUR TROOPS!!!

**Get involved today... by attending the VVA Chapter No. 343's  
February 13th meeting on Friday night, 7:30 PM at Bo's Place.....**



## VETERANS HEALTH CARE UPDATE...

The following is a brief from the Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform. The brief addresses Advance Appropriations for the VA Health Care System.

The partnership consists of the American legion, AMVETS, Blinded American Veterans, Disabled American Veterans, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, Military Order of the Purple Heart of the USA, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and the Vietnam Veterans of America.

John A Miterko  
Veterans Advocate

While great strides have been made in Congress to increase the level of funding during the past several years, there is a long history of significant delays in receiving those funds. Unlike Medicare or Medicaid, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) must rely on Congress and the President to pass a new appropriations law each year to provide VA hospitals and clinics with the funding they need to treat veterans. For the past decade, The Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform has sought to fundamentally change the way veterans health care is funded. While mandatory funding has been the focus over the past several years, the Partnership has developed an alternative approach to achieve the same goals as mandatory funding. The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform Act, new legislation introduced in September 2008, would help to ensure that veterans health care funding is sufficient, timely, and predictable.

### **The Situation**

VA has received its annual funding for veterans' health care late 19 of the last 22 years. Over the past seven years, VA has received its final budget an average of three months *after* the start of the new fiscal year.

Political wrangling has deadlocked the federal budget process, and in turn, the funding for VA hospital and clinics around the country. In addition, VA officials don't know the size of their budget in advance. Not knowing when or at what level of funding VA will receive from year to year – or whether Congress will approve or oppose the Administration's proposals – hinders the ability of VA officials to efficiently plan and responsibly manage their health care system.

Compounding the problem are the new demands placed on the VA system. Since 2001, the number of VA patients has risen by two million – a 50 percent increase. And our newest generation of veterans has increasingly complex mental and physical healthcare needs that may require a lifetime of care.

### **The Impact**

In too many cases, VA is unable to properly treat the physical and mental scars of war, in part because its budget is late and unpredictable. Such an irrational financing system causes unnecessary delays, hold ups, and backlogs in the system. Hiring key staff is put off, or just not done, while injuries like post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury are too often not diagnosed or treated in a timely manner.

A 2007 report by the VA's own Office of Inspector General concluded that 27 percent of the injured veterans seeking treatment at the VA had to wait more than 30 days for an appointment. These men and women had severe service-related injuries.

### **The Solution**

The Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform ("Partnership") – a coalition of nine veteran service organizations with a combined membership of 8 million veterans – helped develop and fully endorse the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform Act. This bill authorizes Congress to appropriate the funding for veterans' health care one year in advance, and adds greater transparency to VA's internal budget process to ensure sufficient funding is approved.

Congress has exercised and continues to exercise its power to approve advance appropriation laws. Currently, Congress funds a number of programs through an advance appropriations budget process, including the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Section 8 housing programs

Unlike the mandatory funding provided to the Medicare and Medicaid systems, advance appropriations would allow Congress to approve funding each year and retain all of its oversight authority over VA programs.

The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform Act ([S. 3527](#) and [H.R. 6939](#)) was introduced in September 2008 by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii) and House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-Calif.).

The proposal received bipartisan support from other leaders in Congress, including Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). In fact, during the presidential campaign, President-elect Obama pledged to push for advance appropriations legislation in his first year in office.

The legislation has also been endorsed by The Military Coalition, comprised of 35 organizations representing more than 5.5 million members of the uniformed services--active, reserve, retired, survivors, veterans--and their families.

In addition, a growing list of more than two dozen former VA medical center directors, regional healthcare network directors, Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries, and other senior VA officials have joined together to support the proposed funding reform.

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## **Health Care for Formerly Ineligible Vets**

Week of January 12, 2009

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced plans to re-open enrollment in its health care system by July 2009 to about 265,000 veterans whose incomes exceed the current VA means test and geographic means test income thresholds by 10 percent or less - so-called Priority 8 applicants. Enrollment for the lowest priority of the eight groups - veterans who are not being compensated for a military-related disability and who have incomes above a set threshold - was suspended on January 18, 2003, although veterans in the priority eight group who were already enrolled for care were permitted to remain enrolled. VA originally suspended enrollment for Priority 8 veterans because it was unable to provide all enrolled veterans with timely access to its health care due to a tremendous growth in the number of veterans then seeking enrollment. VA now plans to reopen enrollment for a portion of these veterans without compromising the Department's ability to provide high quality health care services to all enrolled veterans who are eligible for care.

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## **DoD Decides No Purple Heart for PTSD**

Week of January 19, 2009

The Department of Defense has decided it will not award the Purple Heart to war veterans who have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) because it is not a physical wound. The decision ends the hope of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who have the condition and believed that the Purple Hearts could honor their sacrifice and help remove some of the stigma associated with the condition. For more information about the Purple Heart, visit the Department of Veterans Affairs Purple Heart webpage or go to [military.com](http://military.com).

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## **Veterans Sue Over Chemical Tests**

Week of January 19, 2009

The organization Vietnam Veterans of America and six former Soldiers sued the Central Intelligence Agency claiming the U.S. failed to provide care for human subjects in once-secret tests of chemical and biological weapons and drugs. The tests, codenamed MKULTRA, began in the 1940s at the Edgewood Arsenal near Baltimore and continued to about 1976. At least 7,800 U.S. military personnel served as volunteers in the experiments. The case is *Vietnam Veterans of America v. CIA*, 09-37, U.S. District Court, Northern District of California (San Francisco). The U.S. Senate report on the 1977 Joint Senate Hearing on MKULTRA is available online. To learn more, read the full article at [Military.com](http://Military.com).

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## **VA Assists Financially Burdened Veterans**

Week of January 19, 2009

For veterans struggling financially due to a job loss or decreased income, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is offering an assortment of programs. Veterans whose previous income was ruled too high for VA health care may be able to enter the VA system based upon a hardship if their current year's income is projected to fall below federal income thresholds. Qualifying veterans may be eligible for enrollment and receive health care at no cost. Veterans who recently returned from a combat zone are also eligible for no-cost VA care. For more information, you can contact the enrollment coordinator at any VA medical center, VA's Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222 VETS (8387) or visit the VA health eligibility website. For financial resources and guidance, visit the Military.com Finance Center.

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## **VA to Provide Extra Funds for Rural Vets**

Week of January 19, 2009

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will provide \$21.7 million to its regional health care systems to improve services specifically designed for veterans in rural areas. The extra funding is part of a two-year VA program and will be used to increase the number of mobile clinics, establish new outpatient clinics, expand fee-based care, explore collaborations with federal and community partners, accelerate the use of telemedicine deployment, and fund innovative pilot programs. VA's Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) with less than 3 percent of their patients in rural areas will receive \$250,000. Those with population of rural veterans between 3 percent and 6 percent will receive \$1 million each. And VISNs with more than 6 percent of their veterans population in rural areas will receive \$1.5 million.

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## **Get College Credit for Military Experience in 2009**

Week of January 19, 2009

The American Council on Education (ACE) was created in 1942 to recognize the educational value of military training and experience. Since that time ACE has continuously evaluated military schools, correspondence courses and occupations to determine the amount and level of academic credit each should be awarded. Applying your military experience credits could save you as much as \$600 and 5 months on a typical 3-credit college course. The first step to claiming the credits you have earned is to request a transcript from your military service. Each service will provide unofficial personal copies and send schools an official copy of your transcript at no charge. Military.com works with hundreds of schools that offer college credit for Military service. Spend less money and time in the class room.

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## **The Things You Can't Take With You**

"You can't take it with you," the old saying insists, and it's true, of course. But there's another way to look at the things you can't take with you. The things you leave behind can express the priorities of your life, and how you want to be remembered. Leaving those things to the people and causes you care about can be one of the defining acts of your life. And if you don't do it yourself, a government bureaucracy will do it for you. To avoid that sad fate, many Vietnam members are creating detailed wills. Vietnam Veterans of America is offering a free Will Planning Guide, with a helpful Will Planning Checklist to take the mystery out of the process and for more details, check the vva.org web site.

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## **Featured Job: Security Clearance Jobs for Veterans**

Week of January 19, 2009

Did you know when leaving the military, you can re-activate your clearance for up to 24 months without having to start the process over again? Don't let your security clearance go to waste and use it find the hottest jobs in the industry by visiting [military.com](http://military.com).

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### **APPLICATION FOR VVA MEMBERSHIP**

(Return to: Vietnam Veterans of America San Jacinto Chapter No. 343, P.O. Box 280358, Houston, Texas 77228-0358)

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sex** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Birth** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_ **Chapter No. 343**

**Home Phone** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ **Work Phone** ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type:** \_\_\_ Individual member – 1 year @ \$20 \_\_\_ Individual member – 3 years @ \$50

Life member: \_\_\_ \$225 (ages 50-55) \_\_\_ \$200 (ages 56-60) \_\_\_ \$175 (ages 61-65)

\_\_\_ \$150 (ages 66+) \_\_\_ Optional Life member time payment plan - \$50 down, \$25/month

\_\_\_ Incarcerated Veterans (IVI) \$0: TDCJ # \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_ Incarcerated Veteran Associate (IVA) \$7: TDCJ # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Associate member – 1 year @ \$20

**Payment Method:** \_\_\_ Check \_\_\_ Money Order \_\_\_ Credit Card (Visa, Master Card, American Express, Discover)

**Credit Card Number** \_\_\_\_\_ **Exp. Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Eligibility:** Membership is open to U.S. armed forces veterans who served on active duty (for other than training purposes) in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975, or in any duty location between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975.

**New members and new life members must submit a copy of their DD-214 along with this application and dues payment.**